


# Girl Power and Protection, Now and Forever

Even as a child in Zimbabwe, Nyaradzo Mashayamombe tried to defend and protect abused orphans. In secondary school, she saw boys bullying and mistreating girls and began to dream of a world where things could be different.

Nyaradzo Mashayamombe visits schools  regularly to talk to schoolchildren about their role in preventing violence. (Photo Credit: N. Mashayamombe)

Describing herself as a born activist, Mashayamombe foresaw a time when boys would respect girls as much as themselves. Mashayamombe, a member of the YALI Network, also set her sights on bringing girls greater opportunities for education and achievement.


Mashayamombe celebrates the International Day of the Girl on October 11 with the knowledge that she has shared that dream with about 38,000 people across Zimbabwe through the organization she began in 2010, [Tag a Life International \(TaLI\)](#).

With financial support through U.S. Embassy Harare, the U.S. President's Plan for Emergency AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and Hivos, a Netherlands-based international development organization, Mashayamombe has started TaLI clubs in 76 schools. These chapters and their supporters work to reduce gender-based violence and to address the social circumstances that give rise to such violence. Reducing the occurrence of HIV infection among abused girls is another important objective.

The U.S. Embassy projects that its financial support for TaLI will allow the organization to reach 300 more schools with lessons of respect and opportunity over the next two years.

Even while TaLI supporters envision a time in Zimbabwe when children are never tormented and girls never abused, the organization works to provide resources to children who have already been victimized. TaLI provides medical attention, psychosocial counseling and other support services to abused children. The organization also works with law enforcement to help bring cases of abuse to justice.

"We want to see the government of Zimbabwe committing more resources to the issue of child protection," Mashayamombe said in a statement released in recognition of the Day of the Girl. "We also want to see well-resourced justice delivery system and a swift response to cases of abuse."

South African schoolgirls play a ball  game. Ensuring that girls get educational opportunities will improve their entire future.

Reducing gender-based violence and promoting greater empowerment of girls and women is a cause with broad support across the YALI Network. Another network member wrote us about her work at [Sonke Gender Justice](#). This South Africa-based NGO works across Africa to strengthen government, civil society and citizen capacity to promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS.

Itumeleng Komanyane writes that Sonke Gender Justice envisions a world in which men, women and children can enjoy equitable, healthy and happy relationships that contribute to the development of just and democratic societies.

Creating greater empowerment and opportunity for all is a key value of the Mandela Washington Fellowship program. If you are a community leader involved with these important issues — like Mashayamombe and Komanyane — think about applying to become a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow. The application is open until November 5, 2014, so apply soon. Learn more [here](#).

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## **To Achieve Equality, First Lady Wants to 'Shake Things Up'**

Africa's future lies with women who run businesses, girls who attend university and "leaders like you," U.S. first lady Michelle Obama told young Africans attending the Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders Summit in Washington.

"Leadership is about creating new traditions that honor the dignity and humanity of every individual. Leadership is about empowering all of our people — men, women, boys and girls — to fulfill every last bit of their God-given potential," she said to the gathering of Africa's future leaders.

"When we commit to that kind of leadership across the globe, that is when we truly start making progress on girls' education. Because that's when families in small villages around the world will demand equal opportunities for their daughters. ... That's when countries will willingly and generously invest in sending their girls to school," she stated.

The first lady noted that girls who are educated earn higher wages, are more likely to stand up to discrimination and abuse, and have healthier children who are more likely to attend school themselves.

She recalled that while neither of her parents had gone to university, "they had the courage and foresight to push me to get the best education I could."

"That's what should drive us all — the hope of raising the next generation to be stronger, smarter and bolder than our generation. ... So many of you are already doing that."



The first lady called on the men at the summit and others in the YALI Network to tell all the men they know “that a truly strong, powerful man isn’t threatened by a strong, powerful woman. Instead, he is challenged by her, he is inspired by her, he is pleased to relate to her as an equal.” She implored them “to keep modeling that behavior yourselves by promoting women in your companies, passing laws to empower women in your countries, and holding the same ambitious dreams for your daughters as you do for your sons.”

She called on women at the summit and in YALI — some of whom may have disappointed their families by postponing marriage in order to get an education — to help others to do the same.

Obama told the group that when they face obstacles and resistance in their work goals to remember the words of the man for whom their fellowship is now named — the late South African leader Nelson Mandela:

“It always seems impossible until it is done.”

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## [The Women’s Luncheon at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit](#)

### **What is the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit?**

It’s the largest engagement a U.S. president has ever had with African leaders and governments. The [U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit](#) will bring together 50 heads of state, along with a range of U.S. and African civil society and business leaders, to discuss the future of Africa.

### **What issues will the Summit address?**

The summit leader sessions will focus on topics such as trade and investment, peace and regional stability, and good governance. The signature events will address issues such as civil society, women’s empowerment, global health, resilience and food security, and wildlife trafficking.

### **What will happen at the women’s empowerment event?**

During the *Investing in Women for Peace and Prosperity* signature event, [U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power](#) will host a panel discussion that will emphasize the importance of investing in women for peace and prosperity; highlight African governments’ effort to promote gender equality; and reaffirm African and U.S. commitments to advancing gender equality.

### **Why is this issue important to young African leaders?**

African women’s leadership and meaningful participation across sectors and generations are central to sustainable development in Africa. Women’s participation — in government, the economy, and society — accelerates economic growth, improves health and education, advances democratic governance and fosters peace and security.

When women have the same opportunities and access to resources as do men, the benefits extend beyond women themselves. As women work to strengthen their families and communities, they foster the education and health of the next generation, hasten economic growth and strengthen public and private institutions.

And when women succeed, nations succeed. In countries where women are empowered to participate and to lead, society is safer, more secure and more prosperous. That's because women's participation in and leadership of public and private institutions make these institutions more representative and more effective.

The United States is committed to supporting the efforts of its African partners and young African leaders to expand women's and girls' access to health care, education, clean water and proper nutrition; and to promote women's full participation in society.

### **Photo credit: MCC**

#### **What was the outcome of the Investing in Women, Peace and Prosperity Signature Event at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit?**

Jill Biden, wife of U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, opened the "Investing in Women for Peace and Prosperity" signature event at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in Washington, where the United States committed new assistance to [advance women's empowerment](#) in Africa. The support will bolster women's participation in peace building and in parliamentary campaigns, assist in the development or implementation of National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security, and help women entrepreneurs to launch or expand businesses.

The United States will provide technical support to strengthen African Union and national-level efforts to address barriers to the equal participation of women in the agricultural sector. Through [wPOWER](#) and working with the [Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves](#), it will provide grants to organizations that promote the role of women entrepreneurs in selling clean technologies and that scale-up programs to educate adolescent girls on clean-energy technologies. The United States also will provide increased assistance to the Inter-Parliamentary Union to build the capacity of African parliaments working to advance gender equality and to support parliamentary campaigns on specific gender-equality issues.

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